

## MONTGOMERY

# Far-Reaching Plan Aims To Make Pedestrians Safe

By ANN E. MARIMOW  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Montgomery County would give pedestrians more time to cross busy intersections, build 10.5 miles of sidewalks each year and aggressively ticket jaywalkers and reckless drivers under a \$32.4 million initiative announced yesterday by County Executive Isiah Leggett to address what officials called an epidemic of pedestrian fatalities.

In the past two weeks, four Montgomery pedestrians have been killed, including a 38-year-old Rockville man who died Monday night after being struck in a crosswalk by a Metrobus. Overall, 16 pedestrians have died in collisions this year.

"This is too much," Leggett (D) said yesterday during a news conference in light snowfall on Colesville Road in Silver Spring.

He brushed aside concerns about the cost, given the county's \$401 million budget shortfall, saying, "It is too important for us not to do it."

The far-reaching initiative, which needs County Council approval for funding, would target business districts in neighborhoods such as Silver Spring and Bethesda that have become increasingly congested as parts of the county have evolved from suburban to urban.

"Wherever you have lots of cars and lots of people, you're going to have collisions," Police Chief J. Thomas Manger said. "It has become more of an acute problem."

Under the plan — inspired by recommendations from the county's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, council member Valerie Ervin (D-Silver Spring) and a group of Silver Spring civic associations — the county would streamline the process for building sidewalks, increase street lighting, add engineering staff, step up enforcement of traffic safety measures in areas where there have been a high number of collisions and seek to reduce the number of incidents in those areas by 20 percent.

In the past four years, the county has averaged 14 pedestrian fatalities and 430 collisions involving pedestrians. Manger said the county is again likely to have more than 400 this year. Montgomery became the first county in Maryland to activate speed cameras in the spring and would continue to expand the program beyond its more than 40 locations.